SHRI ANAND SHARMA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this decision of the Government to set up a National Horticulture Mission is indeed a laudable one, and, the hon. Minister has given details as to what the Government proposes to do for post-harvesting and also marketing. Now, Sir, India is one of the largest producers of fruits and vegetables in the world but barely two per cent of that is exported. So, what steps are being taken by the Government to ensure that we have improved packaging industry; and, also incentives to export fruits and vegetables?

SHRI SHARAD PAWAR: Sir, India is the second largest producer of the horticulture produce in the world. There are certain items like banana of which India is the largest producer in the whole world. It is correct that there are two problems, which the Indian farmer is facing. One problem is the very limited facility of the agro-processing unit. Hardly two to three per cent of our produce is processed. If you compare it with a nation like Philippines, you will find that they process practically 65-70 per cent of their horticulture produce, if you compare it with a country like Thailand, they have practivally gone up to 90 per cent, and, we are still processing hardly two to three per cent. This is the reason that a number of facilities and schemes have been introduced by the agro-processing industry to encourage, to set up an agro-processing unit which will be ultimately helpful for the farmer. Secondly, it is true that our export is limited, but it has a tremendous potential. Ours is the only country which can provide different types of fruits practically every month. There are a number of other countries like America and entire Europe, which, practically in entire winter, are not in a position to produce a good variety of horticulture products. This is a golden opportunity for a country like India and, that is why, a number of schemes have been introduced in the Horticulture Mission to provide basic infrastructure, to encourage setting up cold storage and to encourage setting up packaging houses. We are also seriously considering how we can help these exporters to reduce their transport costs.

Diseases in Old People

*246. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a WHO-sponsored study conducted by the doctors of Maulana Azad Medical College, Delhi, on the geriatric problems has

revealed high incidence of diabetes, hypertension and cardiac troubles among old people about which they are neither aware nor have any control over it;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken to address these problems and create an awareness amongst the senor citizens?

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

The Government of India-WHO Collaborative Programme has carried out a multicentric study in 10 sites in India, including Delhi, to identify the health problems of the elderly. The objectives of the study were:—

(a) to assess the morbidity profile of geriatric population (60 years and above);

(b) to study the current level of health care facilities available and the perceived needs of the elderly; and

(c) to suggest means for geriatric health services suitable for rural/ urban community.

The Delhi site study was carried out by Maulana Azad Medical College. The study has brought out major health problems seen in the elderly Indians. The Common co-morbid diseases associated with elderly population showed a prevalence of Ischemic Heart Disease (30%), Diabetes (19%), Hypertension (15.6%), COPD/Asthma (21%) and T.B. (6.4%). The study has also revealed a high prevalence of knee osteoarthiritis and CNS problems such as dizziness. The outcomes of the study has brought out the need for making geriatrics a superspeciality, in view of the multiplicity of problems requiring special care and attention. Since these diseases are related to life style practices, the Government is creating health awareness amongst the people through the media, including electronic media. Government is also in the process of formulating a National Programme for Diabetes and Cardio Vascular Diseases in which the needs of older citizens will also be addressed.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Sir, the reply of the hon. Minister has added to my anxiety about the health of the older people or the senior citizens of the country. My first supplementary is very specific. I want to know whether the Medical Council of India, long back in September, 2000, recommended looking at the health profile of the older people, that every Government hospital should have a specialised Geriatric Department to monitor the health of the older people and also recommended proper treatment for them, and whether the Government has accepted the recommendations of the Medical Council of India; and if so, whether the Government has implemented the recommendations in all the Government Medical Colleges; if not, what are the reasons for not implementing that.

[MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN in the Chair]

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: Sir, I am not aware of the recommendations of the Medical Council of India. I would like to thank the hon. Member for bringing this to my notice. We will look at the recommendations and we will try to act on them. The Government is very committed to the health concerns of the senior citizens of the country. In 1951, the life expectancy of an average Indian was 36 years; in 1981, it was 54 years; in 2000, it was 64 years; and maybe in another 15-20 years, it will be 75 years, and we are going to have a lot more senior citizens in this country. Being the youngest of the House, myself, and the Government of India are very committed to look after the health of the senior citizens of the country. On that line, we are going to open an Out-Patient Department in all the Central Government hospitals in the first phase within this year. In the next phase, we are going to ask the State Governments to compulsorily have an Out-Patient Department, and we are also going to open two centres for senior citizens which are going to be called the Centre of Geriatrics or the Centre of Ageing—one in the North and the other in the South to look into these issues. Now, we have asked the National Board of Examination to have Post-Graduate Courses in Geriatrics. We are looking at these issues. We are definitely concerned about the health of the senior citizens and we will take care of it.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Sir, the recommendations of the Medical Council of India were very specific—that within five years, the Government should implement this programme of specialised treatment for older patients.

Sir, my second supplementary is this. The General Practitioners play a vital role in the treatment of the elderly patients because they cannot go beyond their localities in most of the cases. I would like to know whether a programme is being contemplated by the Health Department of the Central Government to introduce some courses to train and retrain General Practitioners of this country who primarily treat the older patients.

DR. ANBUMANI RAMDOSS: Sir, firstly, the Medical Council of India is a recommendatory body; it recommends various measures to the Government. The Government looks into them and if they are viable, then the Government takes up them.

Secondly, the hon. Member has said about the General Practitioners. Sir, currently there are not much facilities exclusively for senior citizens in the country. Let me say this that only in Madras Medical College, there are certain beds allocated for senior citizens. We need to have more number of beds specified for senior citizens, and then only there will be a lot more awareness towards that. In fact, I have already mentioned to the hon. Member that the National Board of Examinations is considering to start post-graduate courses in Geriatrics...(*Interruptions*)...

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Government's policy on new pharmacies

*247. DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

SHRI GIREESH KUMAR SANGHI:

Will the Minister of CHEMICALS AND FERTILIZERS be pleased to state:

(a) whether affordability of drugs in the product patent era is considered a priority by the present Government;

(b) if so, whether Government propose to set up pharmacies across the country;

(c) whether his Ministry has decided to focus on healthcare and access to cheap drugs by setting up pharmacy chains through a Centre-State initiative;